

# ConnectME Authority

## March 28, 2014 – Meeting Notes

### 1. Introductions

Authority Board Members: Ralph Johnson, Greg McNeal, Dick Thompson, and Tom Welch. Jean Wilson was absent. Dick Thompson served as chair for this meeting.

Authority Staff: Phil Lindley and David Maxwell. Lisa Leahy was absent

The meeting began at 1:04PM. Board members, Authority staff, representatives from the James W. Sewall Company, and the public in attendance introduced themselves. The audience was advised of a variety of informational material available at a side table.

For this meeting, a conference phone line was activated to accompany the webcast.

### 2. ConnectME Grant Extension Requests

Three requests by Pioneer Broadband for grant extensions were unanimously approved.

- Pioneer Broadband: Houlton Carpenter RT, 10/31/2014.
  - Pioneer Broadband: Presque Isle – McBurnie RT, 6/30/2014.
  - Pioneer Broadband: Caribou – Madawaska Rd. RT, 6/30/2014.
- From the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> round, previously granted extensions to 3/31/14. Further extensions needed due to installation and weather issues beyond their control.

### 3. Planning Projects Needs Assessment – Baseline Update 2013 Review

Clarence Young of the James W. Sewall Company briefed Authority members and the public on the 2013 results of the broadband baseline report through a Power Point presentation. The information presented largely centered on responses to and analysis of responses to surveys conducted in 2011 and 2013. The 2013 Baseline Update (Volume 1 and Volume 2) was distributed to Board members present. Electronic versions of each document will be posted to the ConnectME Authority website sometime in the next week. Also shared were two documents highlighting the contents of the report: a four-page summary, including five (5) key findings, and a single sheet statistical summary of the survey results.

Lisa Schoonmaker of the James W. Sewall Company gave a short report of an assessment of the Federal Universal Service Fund (USF), which the Sewall Company is conducting on behalf of the Authority. The final report will be submitted to the Authority sometime in April. Board member Welch requested the Authority staff prepare recommendations regarding the USF for presentation and discussion at the next meeting.

### 4. First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) Project Status

Staff briefed the Board on the status of the project: the Governor has designated the ConnectME Authority as the implementation coordinator for the state; and staff recently attended a national meeting to learn more about the program. Maine has received word that all submitted forms have

been approved. Only the official transfer (de-obligation/re-obligation) of funds between the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the ConnectME Authority remains.

#### 5. Broadband Capacity Building Task Force Project Status

Board members were advised of ten (10) upcoming community forums planned for April; part of the continuing effort to inform attendees of the value of broadband as outlined in the Task Force report. Two other engagements (in Bangor and in Auburn) will further promote the benefits of broadband adoption. Two philanthropic organizations have approached the ConnectME Authority in order to discuss how to assist in the adoption of broadband in Maine.

#### 6. 9<sup>th</sup> Grant Round

Staff shared the tentative schedule for ninth round of grants to promote broadband expansion. Approximately \$800,000.00 will be available for this round. Notice of the grant opening and information regarding the pre-application letter will be sent out April 7, 2014.

#### 7. Broadband Sustainability Fund

Staff shared the Order of Reconsideration issued by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) on February 6, 2014, declining to reconsider the original order that stated that the PUC did not have the statutory authority to enforce against GWI the obligation, established pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 9216 (Section 9216), to pay the statutory broadband sustainability fee. Phil Lindley recommended the Board recognize and accept the PUC decision. Before discussion begun, Board member Tom Welch stated that he would be abstaining from the discussion and any voting, due to his role as Chair of the PUC. Discussion of the matter and the PUC decision ensued. The Board voted unanimously (Welch abstained) to request Assistant Attorney General Tom Knowlton to attend a regular business meeting at which an executive session will be entertained for the purpose of discussing legal issues for this matter. The Authority will schedule this meeting after determining individual availability as soon as possible.

#### 8. Executive Director Report

Staff reviewed the amended budget with the Board. The amended budget received unanimous approval.

Broadband Sustainability Fund disbursements to Lincolnville Networks, Inc. and Tidewater Telecom, Inc. were approved unanimously.

#### 9. Public Comment

There were no comments or questions from the public. The meeting adjourned at 2:51PM.